



Staten Island Advance

Bogus ID gets him gov't access

Advocate for beefed-up border security succeeds in proving his point

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ADVANCE WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON -- You'd think the misspelled address on the ID -- 123 Fraud Blvd., Staten Island -- would be a dead giveaway.

But when Bruce DeCell, a retired cop from Great Kills, presented the card to a guard at Department of Homeland Security headquarters here last week, she handed him a badge and cleared him for escort to the second floor of the building for his meeting with agency officials.

The bogus ID was a black-market version of a Matricula Consular card, which the Mexican government issues to immigrants living in the United States.

When he arrived in the meeting room, "The first thing I told them was, 'I used a [fake ID] to enter your facility,'" DeCell said.

As they looked on "in shock," one of the officials assured him that "we will make sure something like this never happens again," said DeCell, a member of 9/11 Families for a More Secure America.

DeCell estimated that he has used the card perhaps 18 times to test security systems in government buildings, airports and other security-sensitive sites, without ever being challenged.

"I use the card everywhere to show that the government is not on the ball, and that security everywhere is not on the ball," he said. "It's all window dressing."

Jarrold Agen, a spokesman for the department, confirmed the incident, but explained that, before letting him through, the guard checked DeCell's name against a list of visitors who had been pre-cleared to enter the building that day.

"His [name] was vetted through the system here," said Agen. "His name and Social Security data was provided. When he arrived here, his photo was checked against the information."

Agen said the department was investigating the failure to check DeCell's ID card carefully, and would take steps to prevent a recurrence.

DeCell, who lost a son-in-law and cousin at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, was visiting the department with several other members of 9/11 Families, including president Peter Gadiel and former Eltingville resident Joan Molinaro, to discuss immigration reform and border security issues.

The Mexican government has given out millions of the Matricula cards in the U.S. They are accepted at many

banks for making money transfers back to Mexico.

But forged Matricula IDs are easily had through black-market vendors who publicly advertise their services. DeCell said he got his via mail about four years ago from "somebody in California."

"I sent them a passport photo," DeCell said. "They made up all the information except for my name and sent it back to me."

The card also lists a suspicious birth place for DeCell -- Tijuana, Mexico.

The FBI has deemed Matricula cards unreliable because the Mexican government has no centralized database for confirming the identities of those who apply for them.

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